

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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CRISIS FORUM ON VIOLENCE SCHEDULED

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Vernon G. Smith (D-Gary) said the Statewide Community Crisis Forum on Violence in our Community will take place Thursday, Sept. 28 inside the Indiana Government Center South Auditorium, 402 West Washington St., Indianapolis.

The forum, scheduled from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., will be moderated by the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males (ICSSBM) which Dr. Smith helped create through legislation he authored in the early 1990's. Dr. Smith is also the African-American Male National Council Chairman and continues to serve on the ICSSBM Board of Commissioners.

"Black-on-Black violence has hit epidemic proportions," said Dr. Smith. "When an African-American kills another African-American, that destruction of life impacts the entire community. There are many factors for the causation of violence, including drug and gang activity, but we must seek long-term solutions like education, job opportunities, affordable health care, and other quality of life issues which we have explored in previous ICSSBM conferences."

ICSSBM Executive Director James E. Garrett, Jr. added, "The Statewide Community Crisis Forum on Violence will afford both the state commission and local commissions to fill the gap and lead the discussion and offer solutions to discern the root for this violence and holistic mean."

"The lives of each and every African-American are our community's greatest natural resources," Dr. Smith explained. "They are resources that can be used to build the foundation of positive development and positive change. We must transform the current environment of black-on-black destruction to one of black-to-black construction. Let us set aside the weapons of death and pick up the tools of societal change. Let us also remember the sage words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars...Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.' Let us find love for our brothers and sisters that illuminates the sky with the hope and promise of peace and prosperity."

The Crisis Forum will feature community activists and other community leaders, policy directors, law enforcement officers, elected officials, educators and administrators, criminal justice leaders and members of the religious community.

One should RSVP by Sept. 21 by calling Malika Mays at 317-234-1389.

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This release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H14

